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The Southern Frontier

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The Political Scene: Confusion and Crisis

Confusion in South Carolina

The political pot began to boil in earnest in South Carolina in February when Representative John L. Long of Union County offered a resolution calling on "damned Northern agitators" to leave the South alone. Long said that he was willing to shed his blood for white supremacy in the South. His resolution was passed by the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Supreme Court Decision

When the Supreme Court decision in the Texas primary case was announced in April, there were vigorous expressions of disapproval from Democratic leaders in South Carolina. At the state Democratic convention in May, the keynote speaker said: "Fellow Democrats of South Carolina, no decision of the United States Supreme Court in the last fifty years has brought so much doubt, confusion, and humiliation to the white people of South Carolina as has this decision. . . . I should like to see this convention protest against the attempt of the national party to give the colored race the right to participate in our primaries. . . ."

State Democratic Convention

The convention forthwith adopted a resolution declaring "That this party shall continue, as it is now, a party of and for white Democrats only, and that no Negro shall be admitted to membership in our party." Expressing fear that the national Democratic convention will be inclined to go on record as favoring (1) abolition of the poll-tax requirement for voting, (2) federal interference with segregation laws and customs, (3) federal control of education to permit racially mixed public schools, (4) federal anti-lynching legislation, and (5) a Negro nominee "for the Vice-Presidency and even the Presidency," the convention instructed its delegates to "oppose fully to the last minute any attempt or effort on the part of the national Democratic convention to favor any one of those things mentioned before as objectionable to the white Democrats of South Carolina." The delegates to the national convention were uninstructed.

As a hint of further action if the national convention does not go to their liking, the South Carolina Democrats also resolved to meet again on the second Wednesday following the adjournment of the national con-

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Revolt in Texas

In Texas the revolt of the anti-Roosevelt Democrats has reached serious proportions. Perhaps the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Texas white primary case, *Smith vs. Allwright,* was too bitter a pill for the party leaders there.

Convention and Counter Convention

The anti-Roosevelt forces in Texas got busy long before the state Democratic convention met. Without much hullabaloo, they captured a large number of local conventions, and when the state convention was held last month they had a substantial majority of the delegates.

The pro-Roosevelt forces, finding themselves outvoted on crucial points, broke away to hold a convention of their own. They elected a slate of delegates and instructed them to vote for Roosevelt at the Chicago convention. Later they appealed to the State Democratic Executive Committee to certify a slate of pro-Roosevelt presidential electors for printing on the July primary ballot. Failing there, they took the matter to the Texas Supreme Court, but got nowhere.

Uninstructed Electors

The regular convention voted to send uninstructed delegates to the national convention, and, just to show that it meant business, voted to instruct its presidential electors to support the Democratic nominee in the electoral college only if the national Democratic convention makes certain concessions. Specifically, these Texas Democrats want the convention to restore the two-thirds rule, to take a stand for states' rights and against federal "interference" in Southern affairs.

The full import of this maneuver remains to be seen. It may be that even if the national convention turns a deaf ear to the Texas demands the Texas Democrats will fall into line for the sake of party and national unity. However, if there is a close election in November, and if Texas carries through on its threat not to support the party nominee in the electoral college, the election of the President might be thrown into the House of Representatives, and the result would almost certainly be a bitter national controversy.

A Georgia White Woman's Plea

(Mrs. Dorothy Q. Rainey is a member of the Georgia State Democratic Executive Committee. She sent the following letter to the chairman of the Committee two days before the meeting of the Committee in Atlanta on June 22. The letter was published in the Atlanta JOURNAL *of June 20, 1944.)*

I am sincerely disturbed by the published reports that a subcommittee of the Georgia Democratic Executive Committee has recommended the barring of all Negroes from the coming primary. I feel that this action is not merely contrary to the recent overwhelming decision of the Supreme Court and therefore of the fundamental law of our country but also contrary to the sound policy which we shall follow without legal compulsion.

I know of no white Southerners of intelligence and high character who do not wish to encourage our Negro fellow Southerners to lives of thrift, responsibility, and integrity—that is, to lives of good citizenship. To say to a Negro that no matter what his competence and no matter what his personal worth, he is not to be permitted to have a part in the processes of citizenship seems to me a cruel and shameful thing. For my part I am not willing to insult him in this fashion and to challenge his resentment against the white people.

I am aware that the course of action suggested by the committee is dictated not by fear of a certain group of our white Southerners. For these white Southerners, whose thinking is stepped in poverty, in ignorance and in prejudice, I feel a deep concern and pity. I am not, however, willing to accept their dictates in deciding whether I myself shall live up to the finest tradition of the South and of my country and to the universal teachings of Jesus.

As far back as 1880, Governor Alfred H. Colquitt listed among the most valuable results of his administration "kindly relations between the white and colored races due to a liberal spirit in the encouragement of popular education and equal justice in the protection of all races in every right of citizenship to the fullest extent of executive authority." He argued eloquently for "full and impartial justice."

Should the State Democratic Executive Committee decide to follow the course of "wisdom, justice, and moderation" with

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Editorial

This is a critical year in American politics, and it is being made doubly critical by the threatened revolt of the "regular" Democrats in several states of the South. The decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Texas primary case has apparently brought to a head the festering anti-Roosevelt, anti-New-Deal and anti-fourth-term sentiment in the deep South and has precipitated a Democratic revolt in South Carolina, Texas, and Mississippi.

The most spectacular phase of this rebellion is the Texas Democratic convention's threat that the Democratic Presidential electors may refuse to support the party nominee in the electoral college unless the national Democratic convention yields to certain demands of Southern Democrats. In other words, the revolters are going to the Chicago convention in July prepared to do some fancy political horse-trading—or perhaps black-mailing would be a more accurate term. They want the two-thirds rule restored, they want a declaration for more states' rights, they want assurance that Uncle Sam will not interfere with their handling of the race problem, and they want a Southerner—or anybody but Wallace—for Vice-President.

Now it remains to be seen whether these rebellious Democrats mean business or whether they are merely making a dramatic gesture of defiance before yielding to the inevitable. Our guess is that they mean business, and that this thing has possibilities of producing a bitter and devastating national controversy.

The next scene in this little drama will take place at the Democratic convention in Chicago. It is barely possible, of course, that the regular Texas delegation may not be seated. The credentials committee *could* say, "Since your state convention has already declared that its electors are not obligated to support the party nominee in the electoral college, you don't belong here." If the delegation is seated, it will have won the first round, and the fight will go on from there. If the pro-Roosevelt delegation, elected by the rump convention in Texas, is seated, then the Democratic party in Texas is split wide open, if indeed it is not already split. Unless the "regulars" called a new convention to iron the matter out, the pro-Roosevelt forces would have to organize a party, conform to the election laws, and put forth a slate of electors pledged to support the party nominee in the electoral college. In fact, they may have to do this anyway in order to make sure that a vote for Roosevelt is really a vote for Roosevelt.

But assuming that the "regular" delegation is seated at the national convention, then what? The nomination of Roosevelt can be taken for granted. The Texans and their allies might be willing to settle for the Vice-Presidency, but Wallace has been growing in political stature and popularity, and he is not going to be easily beaten out of the nomination for the Vice-Presidency. It is highly doubtful whether the two-thirds rule can be restored, and it is almost certain that the platform will not contain such pronouncements on states' rights and race relations as will ease the pains of the revolting Southerners. In other words, the rebel Democrats may go home with little to show for their efforts.

Will the revolters then, in revenge, carry through on their threat to desert the party nominee in the electoral college? Assuming that the unpledged Texas Democratic electors win in the November election and go to the electoral college with the avowed intention of voting for any candidate they please, what then? Obviously, if there is a landslide vote for either the Democratic or the Republican candidates, the Texas electoral vote will not matter one way or the other. But if there is a slim Democratic majority, then the 23 electoral votes of Texas or the 40 votes of Texas, Mississippi, and South Carolina can throw the choice of the electoral college to the Republican candidate or they can block the electoral college and throw the election into the House of Representatives. There each state would have one vote, a vote determined by the majority of its representatives. New York, for example, has 22 Democrats, 22 Republicans, and one American Labor Partyite in the House, and so, if New York's vote were decisive, the honor of electing a President would fall upon Vito Marcantonio, only representative of the American Labor Party. Likewise, if the electoral college cannot agree on a Vice-President, the election of that official would go to the Senate. Thus we might have a Democratic President and Republican Vice-President, or vice versa. Whatever happens, the ensuing confusion and bitterness would make the Jackson-Adams affair of 1824 and the Hayes-Tilden dispute of 1876 look like child's play.

What an intelligent way to be spending our energies when we need to put the last ounce of our strength and unity into winning the war as soon as possible! And what a way to thwart the will of American voters!

If progressive Southerners can find any consolation at all in this sorry beat-Roosevelt-at-any-price conspiracy, it is this: the revolting Democrats may unwittingly do the best job of splitting the Solid South and making way for popular government that has ever been done. In a party split, such as seems to be inevitable in Texas, the Negro voter is sure to play a stronger role than usual in the general election, and that is certainly not what the rebel wing had in mind.

Yes, one wonders whether the revolting Democrats know their American history and whether they have asked themselves what might happen in addition to what they hope will happen. The electoral college system was devised largely to keep the South, with its large non-voting slave population, from being overshadowed by the North, and it has continued to give the South an unearned advantage in national Democratic affairs. The surest result of such a debacle as we have suggested above is a great popular demand for an amendment to the Constitution providing for the direct election of the President and Vice-President by popular vote. Such an amendment might have a fair chance of passing. If it were adopted, there is only one way in which the South could retain anything like a fair share of power in national politics, and that is to get out the vote regardless of race, creed, or color!

A Challenge to the Democratic Party

(*The Atlanta Daily World, June* 21, 1944)

. . . The issue whether Negroes shall or shall not vote in the Democratic Primaries is clearly known. It is an issue between a slave's existence and that of a free individual. It is, as Vice-President Wallace pointed out about the present war, a struggle between a free and a slave world.

There is nothing to fear about the Negro vote in Georgia, because there is nothing to fear about peace-loving Negroes of the state. The Negro vote, like Negro citizens, will and must be used to further the righteous ends and ambitions of the whole people of Georgia. There is ample provision in the state constitution respecting the qualifications of electors sufficient to prevent control of the Democratic Primary by an ignorant or venal voter, whether white or black.

Finally, let it be said, the thousands of intelligent Negro Democrats over the State who plan voting on July Fourth will break no tradition in the South. Though new in this State, Negroes have voted and continue to vote, both in Tennessee and in North Carolina. And they vote as Democrats. To rule affirmatively, the State Executive Committee will vote to uphold the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution, our highest authority. . . .

We sincerely hope the Democratic Committee, as the controlling political party of the State, will live up to its duty and grant this simple request for elemental justice to Negro Democrats.

What the People Say: Letters To the Papers

Negro Democrats

(*The Charleston News-Courier, May* 21, 1944)

Editor: The News and Courier is insistently trying to raise a hullabaloo of dissension in Democratic ranks by appealing to racial prejudices. The News and Courier had better find some sensible, valid reason for excluding Negroes from the Democratic party—certainly a better reason than their advocacy of a fourth term for Roosevelt. The Negroes have a right to vote, and their exclusion from the Democratic primaries will certainly not exclude them from voting in the presidential election.

Yes, the writer is a true New Dealer, but not as the New Deal is appraised by The News and Courier. The writer is not ashamed to say that he is a friend of the Negro; he does not believe in spectacular appeals to race prejudice.

ROBERT S. BAILEY

St. George, S. C.

Negro Votes

(*The Atlanta Constitution, June* 22, 1944)

Editor: Many people seem to like the idea of Negroes voting. I for one most assuredly do not. I realize the fact that some Negroes are across the seas fighting, and working in defense jobs. But I know many white boys at the age of 17 who are also fighting. They are not given the privilege of voting.

While some Negroes are in the fight there are still many more who are walking the streets in zoot suits. Why can't they be put to work or sent across?

WESLEY G. BAILEY, II

Atlanta, Georgia.

Would Revive Talmadge

(*The Atlanta Journal, June* 22, 1944)

Editor: I think that we have had enough New Yorkers in the White House. It is now time for us Southerners to elect someone from our own section to the presidency.

Presidential candidates from the North and West may claim to be friends of the South, but after they take office, whether they be Republican or Democrat, they treat us like undesirable stepchildren. They all maintain freight rates that are unfair to the South; and they continually try to enact federal legislation to abolish the poll tax, a tax that helps to maintain our schools and roads. At the present time the New Yorkers in the White House are attempting to perpetrate their greatest crime. They are trying to destroy one of the South's greatest institutions, the white primary.

I think that the white supremacy South should make every effort to elect a real Southerner to the White House, so as to bring about the proper development of this section.

I suggest that the South endorse its greatest citizen for the presidency, Eugene Talmadge.

J. B. STONER

Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Strangely Ironic

(*The Atlanta Journal, June* 11, 1944)

Editor: Is it not strangly ironic that the front page of Wednesday's *Journal*, filled with news of the invasion of Europe by which we hope democracy will be preserved, should carry one discordant item indicating how little we value democracy at home: "State Group Bans Negroes in Primary?"

Obviously there is no democracy when a group of citizens are banned from participating in the only election which has any meaning on the basis of that theory of the "master race" which we so despise in the Nazis yet cherish in ourselves.

Why should we not join Virginia, North Carolina and other Southern states in following the democratic practice of allowing all Democrats to vote in the primaries regardless of race?

I speak as a Southern white woman who cherishes all that is fine and noble in Southern tradition and must therefore cry out against the base hypocrisy of paying tribute to democracy with the lips while destroying it in action.

ALMA METCALFE

Decatur, Georgia.

Asks for Tolerance

(*The Atlanta Journal, June* 18, 1944)

Editor: After reading Alma Metcalfe's letter I was elated to learn that real Americans in spirit and deed still exist in Georgia despite the cloud of intolerance that has gathered over our heads. I have read many letters like Alma Metcalfe's in your column and I read them with a pride that contrasted greatly with the disgust I felt whenever I read the inane and unjust alibis of the bigots. I believe if a census was taken among Georgians that Americans would far outnumber the prejudiced groups here. Why can't this be done so that the people who believe in justice can see to it that our colored citizens can vote in the primary? That is the only democratic solution. The voice of real America should not be silenced in these crucial times by the puny intolerance of some Georgians. Another white citizen.

MRS. ROSE WATTS

Atlanta, Georgia.

Don't Thwart Democracy

(*The Atlanta Journal, June* 19, 1944)

Editor: I, too, want to join Mrs. Rose Watts in adding my voice in appreciation of the letter recently appearing in *The Journal* under the name of Alma Metcalfe, protesting the recent decision to bar Negroes of Georgia from participating in the state primary. As Mrs. Metcalfe pointed out, it was indeed ironical that this decision appeared in our papers on the very day of the great Allied invasion of France.

We are sending our boys, Negro and white, into those battles to preserve the democracy that we love so much. I have a boy in this struggle, too, and I can fully appreciate the great sacrifices these boys and their families are making. All over the world the downtrodden peoples of the earth are crying out for their rights as free men and we in this great nation of ours have a destiny to perform in showing to the world the true spirit of democracy, free from discrimination because of race, color, or creed.

Can we afford to ask Negro boys to lay their lives on the altar of democracy and then deny to their people the right as citizens to participate in the primary? Can we expect good citizenship to emerge from such discrimination? And isn't the aim of democracy to set a pattern that is conducive to good citizenship?

The divine idea of freedom and justice is permeating human consciousness today as never before. Let it not be said of the citizens of Georgia that they were guilty of any move to thwart it.

This too comes from a Southern-born white woman.

MRS. A. G. SPIVEY

Atlanta, Georgia.

Time Will Heal

(*The Atlanta Journal, June* 22, 1944)

Editor: In answer to the timely article entitled "Don't Thwart Democracy," by a Mrs. A. G. Spivey, who ends her article as "A Southern Born White Woman."

Your letter, Mrs. Spivey, was greeted with heart-felt interest. I can assure you that your name can be placed on the roll of the true democracy. Many Negroes, if they were able to read The Journal, would, without a doubt, smile deep down in their hearts, and therefore issue forth a prayer to Almighty God, asking that his wonderful blessings be bestowed upon you, yours and thousands in America like you.

I am a so-called Yankee Negro; but I am also an American, true throughout my entire body. I live and breathe true democracy for every American, regardless of race, creed or color. Whether I am north or south of the Mason and Dixon line, I am an American. Naturally I have encountered many obstacles on the broad highway of life, but time, and time alone, will heal all racial, social and educational indifferences.

CORPORAL HENRY R. ROGERS
Lawson General Hospital
Atlanta, Ga.

The Atlanta Police Department Crime Bureau's report for the month of May states that 12 rape cases were reported. Eight of these complaints were judged unfounded or baseless. Of the remaining four cases, police reported that two were cleared up and two remained unsolved.

Standing Commiftees of the Southern Regional Council

Four of the five standing committees authorized by the Board of Directors at its meeting on April 28 have been appointed. The personnel of the Committee on Public Relations is not yet complete. The other committee appointments are as follows:

Committee on Membership: Mrs. M. E. Tilly, Benjamin E. Mays, Mrs. Grace T. Hamilton, Frank McCallister, R. L. Foreman, Jr., Atlanta, Georgia; Louis E. Burnham, Birmingham, Alabama; King Vivion, Nashville, Tennessee.

Committee on Finance: W. W. Alexander, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Wilson M. Brown, Richmond, Virginia; Charles S. Johnson, Nashville, Tennessee; Walter J. Matherly, Gainesville, Florida; L. D. Milton, Atlanta, Georgia.

Committee on Publications: Gordon B. Hancock, Richmond, Virginia; William E. Cole, Knoxville, Tennessee; Virginius Dabney, Richmond, Virginia; A. W. Dent, New Orleans, Louisiana; Mildred Mell, Decatur, Georgia.

Committee on Fellows: Horace M. Bond, Fort Valley, Georgia; Clark Foreman, Black Mountain, North Carolina; George S. Mitchell, Atlanta, Georgia; Thomas S. Staples, Conway, Arkansas; Forrester B. Washington, Atlanta, Georgia; James T. Taylor, Durham, North Carolina.

According to the Dallas *Morning News*, the Chairman of the Democratic County Committee of Navarro County, Texas, has instructed his precinct chairmen to allow Negroes qualified as voters to participate in party primaries, under terms of the recent United States Supreme Court decision.

Confusion in South Carolina

(*Continued from Page* 1)

vention in order "to especially consider the platform of the National Democratic Party as adopted at the approaching convention."

A New Party

Meantime, Negro Democrats in South Carolina, seeing that there was no hope of participating in the regular party councils, organized the Progressive Democratic Party, open to all voters regardless of race. Late in May they held a convention and elected delegates to the national Democratic convention. These delegates will contest the seating of the "regular" delegates. The convention adopted a platform pledging the Progressive Democrats to work "for the elevation of all our citizens, whatever their color or race, from the depths of political and economic despair. . . . ," and promised to offer a full slate of candidates in the November general elections.

Senator Maybank has termed the leaders of this party "agitators and trouble-makers" and has said that he is certain that the party delegates will not be seated by the Democratic convention in Chicago in July.

Voices of the South

(*New York Post, May* 10, 1944)

The Texas politicians, and their brethren in other Southern States, are taking it hard. Listening to them one might get the impression that the whole South feels as they do. But it doesn't at all.

From Atlanta in the deep South comes the voice of the Southern Regional Council, made up chiefly of people the politicians would be happy to have to dinner, telling them to keep calm; the Constitution of the United States won't ruin the South.

And telling them, too: "We cannot honestly wage a war for freedom and democracy in foreign lands when we deny to our own Negro citizens the rights and privileges which are justly theirs."

That is the voice of the modern South and it will prevail.

The chairman of the Democratic State Committee in Arkansas stated recently, "Election judges should allow Negroes to vote in the Democratic primary elections this summer, provided that they possess a poll tax receipt and otherwise appear qualified."

North Carolina has become the first Southern State to eliminate the differences in salaries of Negro and white school teachers. A plan was adopted several years ago to equalize the teachers salaries over a period of years, but recently the State Board of Education voted to remove the differential with surplus funds expected to be on hand during the 1944-45 school term. No legal suits have ever been brought in North Carolina to achieve equalization.

A Georgia White Woman's Plea

(*Continued from Page* 1)

regard to Negro voting, it will find ample support in the counsel of the bravest and best of Georgians and Southerners.

It is now clear that if America remains a democracy, operating under laws of fair play and equal opportunity, the Negro who is qualified to vote is going to be given the vote. Is it not just as clear that white Southerners who have regarded themselves as true friends of the Negro will make an intolerable blunder if, by denying him association with themselves in the Democratic Party, they drive him into the camp of their enemies? Our record as individuals and as a group is now being made not just in the eyes of the Negro, but in the eyes of the world and in the eyes of history.

Since almost certainly I am not going to be able to attend the meeting on Thursday, I ask that you read this letter to the committee as my plea to them to take action that will make allies and not enemies of the responsible people of both races in the South. We have enough problems to solve without fighting each other.

MRS. DOROTHY Q. RAINEY
Atlanta, Georgia.

Plea of the Atlanta Negro Citizens Committee

(*On June* 22 *the Negro Citizens Committee sent the following letter to the Georgia State Democratic Executive Committee which was in session that day.*)

The State Democratic Executixe Committee
Atlanta, Georgia
Dear Sirs:

Because the Negroes of Georgia are not only concerned with the full possession of their constitutionally guaranteed right as citizens of this free Republic, but also because they are zealous of the highest welfare and good name of their state, they, through this committee, urgently request your body to reconsider the recent decision of your sub-committee that, wholly on the basis of race, Negroes will not be permitted to vote in Georgia primaries. We do not need to remind you that this attitude is in direct conflict with the principles upon which our beloved country was founded. . .

We remind you of what every true American knows, that no free country, or part of it can long exist half free and half slave. It is difficult for us to believe that the dominant political party in the sovereign State of Georgia will insist upon continuing a policy which will virtually reduce to political serfdom almost a third of its population. A segment of the population, moreover, that for over a century has given lavishly of blood, sweat and tears, for its posterity and its good name. The argument that the admission of Negroes to the unrestricted use of the ballot, would be a threat to the orderly administration of Government in the State of Georgia is fallacious—a product of prejudice and unfounded fear. America joins hands with liberty-loving men the world around, in a global struggle to free man everywhere from tyranny and oppression. Can it consistently spend, without stint, both gold and human lives in extending the boon of freedom to other peoples, while it denies it to her own citizens? If it is safety for our cherished institutions which has been the motivating force in your action, may we remind you that it is far safer in a democracy for the humblest man to have a ballot in his hand than a wrong in his heart. . . .

We hope that you will see fit generously to grant the opportunity to participate in the process of government of our state to those qualified Negro citizens whose choice is the Democratic party. We respectfully urge you, therefore, in regular session assembled to reconsider the decision of your sub-committee with the hope that barriers set up against Negroes, wholly on the basis of race, in the Democratic Primaries will be discontinued. We do this in the interest of interracial good will, the highest Americanism, and the welfare of our great state.

Very truly yours,
C. L. HARPER, *Chairman*
Negro Citizens Committee

Dr. Willis J. King, President of Gammon Theological Seminary and Member of the Southern Regional Council, has been named a bishop of the Methodist Church to serve in Liberia.